



United States Attorney
Southern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 4, 2003

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD,
MICHAEL KULSTAD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600

BOSS OF DECAVALCANTE FAMILY PLEADS GUILTY TO MURDER

JAMES B. COMEY, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that GIOVANNI RIGGI, a/k/a "John Riggi," a/k/a "Uncle John," a/k/a "the Eagle," the Boss of the Decavalcante Organized Crime Family of La Cosa Nostra, pled guilty today in Manhattan Federal Court before Chief United States District Court Judge MICHAEL B. MUKASEY to conspiring to murder Frederick Weiss. Weiss, a businessman, was gunned down outside his home on Staten Island on September 11, 1989.

Evidence at previous trials established that Weiss was killed by members and associates of the Decavalcante Family on RIGGI's orders as a favor to John Gotti, then the Boss of the Gambino Organized Crime Family, because Gotti believed that Weiss might have been cooperating with the Government against the Gambino Family. In particular, evidence at a prior trial established that RIGGI believed that the murder of Fred Weiss would put the

Decavalcante Family back on the map in the world of La Cosa Nostra.

RIGGI pled guilty to murder in aid of racketeering activity, which carries a maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment and RIGGI, 78, has agreed to the maximum sentence of ten years. He is currently serving a 12 year sentence in connection with a conviction in 1992 in New Jersey for extortion, and was scheduled to be released next summer.

Since 1999, over thirty members and associates of the Decavalcante Family - including the entire hierarchy of the Family - have been charged with engaging in a widespread pattern of racketeering activity, including numerous murders and murder conspiracies, loansharking, gambling, extortion and securities fraud. The charges grew out of a three-year investigation by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York City Police Department, and the Department of Labor, Office of Labor Racketeering.

To date, over 30 Decavalcante members and associates have either pled guilty or been convicted after trial. Most recently, after a seven-week jury trial in Manhattan Federal Court in April 2003, a jury convicted STEFANO VITABILE, the Consigilere of the Family, and PHILIP ABRAMO and GIUSEPPE "Pino"

SCHIFILLITI, both Caporegimes or Captains in the Family, of various racketeering offenses, including murder, loansharking, securities fraud and extortion. The extortion conspiracy proved at trial involved the Decavalcante Family's 20-year control of much of the construction industry in the northern New Jersey area, pursuant to which the evidence at trial showed millions of dollars were extorted from construction-industry contractors in various "shake-downs". As to the securities fraud, the jury heard extensive testimony about a sophisticated "pump and dump" scheme involving the 1995 initial public offering of stock in SC&T International, Inc., in which investors were bilked out of millions of dollars.

The evidence at the April trial also established that the Decavalcante Family - which is based in New Jersey but has crews operating in New York - engaged in wide-ranging acts of racketeering for over 100 years, including testimony from multiple witnesses that it is the oldest Cosa Nostra Family in the Nation.

With Riggi's plea, all of the members of the Decavalcante Family's hierarchy have now been convicted, with the exception of GIROLAMO PALERMO, a/k/a "Jimmy Palermo." PALERMO, the former Underboss of the Decavalcante Family and a former

Acting Boss on the Family's Ruling Panel, has been charged with murder conspiracy, construction industry extortion and loansharking, and is scheduled to begin trial in Manhattan Federal Court on September 22, 2003. Another Decavalcante Family Soldier in a crew based in Florida, ANTHONY MANNARINO, a/k/a "Marshmallow," who is facing obstruction of justice and loansharking charges, is scheduled to be tried with PALERMO.

Mr. COMEY praised the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York City Police Department in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys JOHN M. HILLEBRECHT, MICHAEL G. MCGOVERN, MIRIAM E. ROCAH and DAVID P. BURNS are in charge of the prosecution.

03-209

###